
Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching

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Editorial

Due to the emergence of the self in foreign/second language (L2) motivation theory and research following the introduction of the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009), the past decade has witnessed a surge of attention devoted to the two self dimensions: the Ideal L2 Self, and the Ought-to L2 self of the model (Boo, Dörnyei, & Ryan, 2015). The third core component, however, the L2 Learning Experience has become undeservedly marginalized. We think that such relative neglect has been brought about by two phenomena. On the one hand, the L2 Learning Experience, has so far been underconceptualized, and, as such, its intangible, amorphous nature has undermined its applicability in research on a similar scale that a more elaborate theorization of the other two future self-guides has enabled. On the other hand, by incorporating Markus and Nurius' (1986) possible selves theory into L2 motivation research, Dörnyei was able to import adaptable and novel concepts to the field, which set the course of the research agenda for years to come.

In spite of this comparative indifference surrounding the L2 Learning Experience, similarly to many scholars (e.g., Dörnyei, 1994, 2009; Gardner, 1985, 2010; Lamb, 2012, 2017; Noels, Pelletier, Clément, & Vallerand, 2000; Ushioda, 1998, 2009; Williams & Burden, 1997), we are convinced that this component of the L2MSS plays an important role in L2 motivation. Therefore, we embarked on this project concerning the third core component of the L2MSS, and planned this special issue for *Second Language Learning and Teaching*. We invited scholars from around the globe to share the results of their studies on the motivational impact of the L2 Learning Experience with a view to including as diverse sources of contributions as possible in the current issue. Besides demonstrating how the L2 Learning Experience exerts its influence on L2 motivation in a variety of contexts, by editing this volume we also wanted to provide an up-to-date conceptualization of the L2 Learning Experience. Dörnyei and Ryan (2015, p. 88) described the constituent of the L2MSS as follows:

The third component, the L2 Learning Experience, is different from the first two in that it focuses on the learner's present experience, covering a range of situated, 'executive' motives related to the immediate learning environment (e.g., the impact of the L2 teacher, the curriculum, the peer group, and the experience of success).

However, in this special issue, we would like to argue that the L2 Learning Experience is a broader concept. The issue starts with a theoretical paper, followed by eight studies presenting the findings of empirical research in the field, conducted in the qualitative and mixed methods paradigms. The first empirical study focuses on primary school pupils whereas the second is set in secondary school contexts. The subsequent four studies center on students studying at tertiary education. The seventh empirical study investigates L2 teachers as L2 learners, while the last study compares the current L2 Learning Experience of learners across a variety of ages and contexts to the L2 Learning Experience of L2 teachers.

Our special issue begins with Dörnyei's theoretical article on the L2 Learning Experience, which he very aptly called "the Cinderella of the L2 Motivational Self System." In his article, Dörnyei defined the L2 Learning Experience as "the perceived quality of the learners' engagement with various aspects of the language learning process," and he argued that seeing the situated learning experience as part of an engagement-specific framework might facilitate linking it with the other two dimensions of the L2MSS.

The empirical part of the issue starts with Henry and Thorsen's ethnographic case study of two lessons, which drew on research from the culturally responsive teaching paradigm and highlighted the role of empathy and perspective-taking in L2 motivation. The paper investigated, by observing Swedish ninth graders, how minuscule interactions between teachers and learners might affect motivation and engagement. Henry and Thorsen argued that while motivation and engagement fluctuated, motivational dispositions were best conceptualized as the cumulative results of numerous micro-level interactions.

Pavelescu's study used various qualitative methods (a written task, multiple interviews, and observation) to investigate the link between motivation and emotion by interviewing and observing two Romanian teenage EFL learners and two of their L2 teachers. Apart from establishing a link between emotions and motivation, the results of her study are evidence to the complexity of the L2 Learning Experience, in as much as both out-of-class experiences (positive or non-existing) and in-class experiences related to the L2 teacher (positive or negative) exert their influence on L2 motivation.

Hiver, Obando, Sang, Tahmouresi, A. Zhou, and Y. Zhou investigated the L2 Learning Experience of eight college students with the help of a newly developed instrument: the *Language Learning Story Interview*. Through qualitative comparative analysis, they demonstrated how L2 learners constructed narratives of the L2 Learning Experience, and what components made up these narratives. They identified prototypical scenes, as well as core specifications and parameters of learners' narrative accounts of the L2 Learning Experience.

Du's study tracked the English learning motivation of three Chinese university students for six months after finishing a semester-long exchange program in an English-speaking country. By using the mixed methods research paradigm, she concluded that study abroad (SA) experiences had a profound impact on the participants' ideal-self images. While positive SA experiences contributed to an ideal self of students with higher proficiency and international posture, she found that unsatisfactory experiences resulted in lessening the role of the L2 in the participants' future work and life.

Using similar research methodology (a questionnaire and multiple interviews), Kikuchi studied the motivational trajectory of four Japanese university students over a period of two years. He investigated how the learners' L2 motivation was subject to change over this time period as a result of their learning experiences, and identified unique motivators, demotivators, as well as individual coping mechanisms. His results showed that future self-guides were not strengthened by L2 learning experiences.

Pigott's study was also conducted in the Japanese context. He investigated how fleeting experiences exerted a disproportionately powerful impact on the L2 motivation of five Japanese university students. The study, spanning the course of 18 months, identified two principal consequences of significant incidents: one referred to as *anagnorisis*, an immediate revelatory change in beliefs about language learning; the other labeled *narrative incorporation*, a process through which the incident becomes a constituent of self-narratives.

Gearing's study investigated the motivation of L1 speakers of English learning Korean, the language of their host country where they resided and worked at the time of the interviews. The unique nature of this paper lies in the fact that it addressed demotivation, amotivation, and remotivation in the South Korean context, and explored how L2 experiences affected the L2 motivation of 14 English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructors working in South Korean university language education centers (LECs). The main result of this study was that individuals having insufficient internal motivation or vision to acquire Korean attributed externally related demotivating experiences to amotivation.

Finally, as editors, we would like to introduce our own interview study, which mapped the L2 Learning Experience of 22 former and current language

learners in the Hungarian context. Our results show that the L2 Learning Experience is a broader and complex construct which includes present and past aspects as well as self-related components. Language learning success, the teacher's personality, contact experiences, and attitudes were amongst the most salient elements in the process of L2 learning. As our study did not discuss the relative importance of the various components, we can only hypothesize that experiences which stem from multiple sources are more determinant. Perhaps, it is not surprising that having conducted our empirical research, and read all the contributions, we felt the need to broaden the conceptualization of the L2 Learning Experience. Several of the studies in this special issue emphasized the duality of the L2 Learning Experiences: on the one hand, its immediate, situation-specific realization; and, on the other, its long-term, life-shaping feature, which exerts its influence on L2 motivation through accumulation and attributions. Therefore, we define the L2 Learning Experience as follows:

The L2 Learning Experience is the perception of internal cognitive and emotional processes, as well as external stimuli and circumstances that the learner experiences during the course of learning a foreign language in and outside the classroom; it is shaped and determined by attributions stemming from past L2 learning and L2 use experiences that continually evolve after the actual language learning and language use has taken place.

We think that it is important to position the L2 Learning Experience in a more complex contextual framework that encompasses various aspects (from classrooms to a variety of social contexts) as the ultimate aim of language learning is to slowly shift language learning experiences into language use experiences. As a consequence, future research projects should consider the complex, internal structure of the L2 Learning Experience, that is, how the various components relate to one another. Both larger-scale quantitative studies and more situated qualitative studies need to be conducted to measure and explore the possible importance of the various components. Additionally, further studies should investigate the impact of the L2 Learning Experience on the learning process and how various experiences are internalized and develop into beliefs related to this process. Broadening foreign language learning experiences and investigating language use experiences should also be added to our research agenda.

We would like to extend our gratitude to a number of people. First and foremost, Mirosław Pawlak and his team at SSLT for inviting us to do this project and helping with finishing it. We are also indebted to the contributors who enthusiastically answered our call and helped us with their work. You made this issue really special! Last but not least, we could not have done it without the help of our anonymous reviewers (you know who you are!): next time it is our turn.

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